

TAPE RECORDINGS OF
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
IN THE ESTATE OF
LETITIA WOODS BROWN

Prepared by
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Oral History
submitted May 1980

Tape Recordings in the Estate of Letitia Woods Brown

Letitia Woods Brown, inspired teacher, leading historian and noted author, was an enthusiastic pioneer in the development of Washington, D.C. historical studies.

The daughter of teachers at Tuskegee, Mrs. Brown was raised on the campus, and in 1935 was awarded her undergraduate degree from the Institute. Mrs. Brown earned Master's degrees from Ohio State University and Radcliffe College. Continuing her education at Harvard University, she received her Ph.D. in 1966.

In 1972, she published Free Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1790-1846, a significant contribution to historical scholarship on urban blacks. Mrs. Brown also coauthored two monographs documenting the achievements of black Washingtonians, 1791-1970. Mrs. Brown actively participated in the preservation movement, advocating preservation of sites important to the history of Washington's Negro community. She served on the Board of the Columbia Historical Society, as vice chairman of the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital, and was instrumental in organizing the annual conference on Washington, D.C. Historic Studies.

Mrs. Brown was associated with over ten universities, spending nine years on the faculty of Howard University. In 1971, Mrs. Brown received a joint appointment as Professor of American History and Civilization at The George Washington University. Mrs. Brown taught at GW until her untimely death in August 1976.

Among the valuable scholarly materials in the estate of Mrs. Brown are over forty cassette tapes of interviews and lectures recorded by Mrs. Brown, her son, and her students. The subject addressed in each tape is the Negro experience. With the exception of Mrs. Brown's interview with her mother, all of the interviewees are black, generally well educated, long-time residents of Washington.

Although the interviews conducted by Mrs. Brown's students are interesting and informative--particularly the interviews with Hayden Pair--this project is limited to a discussion of Mrs. Brown's interviews, including time segment indices for each tape, and a full transcription of one thirty minute selection.

Mrs. Brown used oral histories as a valuable research tool to pursue her study of black Washington. Differing in approach from traditional scholarship, particularly the works of Constance McLaughlin Green, Mrs. Brown sought to understand and explain the Negro community in, and of itself rather than analyze the interplay between the races. Mrs. Green, in the Secret City and her two volume study of Washington, viewed (or as Mrs. Brown used to say "peeped down" at) Negro Washington only within the context of white society.

Explaining the Negro experience only in terms of its relationship to white society led Mrs. Green to make several broad assumptions and rather sweeping generalizations which Mrs. Brown believed were not well founded. It was Mrs. Green's contention that black experience was characterized by social disorganization, widespread bitterness directed at fellow blacks, strict class distinction based on skin color, and a pervasive striving to

emulate (virtually covet) white society.

Much of Mrs. Green's information on Negro society was gleaned from traditional printed sources--newspapers, period studies, Congressional documents--which recounted prevailing white attitudes toward the blacks, rather than offering vital information on a culture that Mrs. Green freely admitted was unknown to the white world. Mrs. Brown recognized the paucity of scholarship on black Washington, and sought her information from participants in the community rather than observers of it.

Mrs. Brown's recurring inquiries during the interviews reflected her interest in modifying Mrs. Green's approach. By gathering information on social groups, clubs, societies, family relationships, churches, Mrs. Brown was supporting her contention that social disorganization did not characterize the black community. Her interest in the leaders of black Washington, led to the conclusion that not all well-respected, upper class Negroes were of predominantly white blood.

As well as seeking documentation of hypotheses, Mrs. Brown used the oral history interviews ^{for developing new} as avenues for further research. Discussions tended to be general rather than in-depth explorations of a particular topic. In most interviews, a wide variety of questions were asked. Mrs. Brown frequently let the interviewee take direction of the conversation. She asked to see photos, asked the names of ancestors when not volunteered by the interviewee, and inquired about the disposition of personal papers.

Unfortunately there are too few interviews to reach any positive conclusions; however, the tapes do provide evidence that Mrs. Green's approach to the study of black Washington is inadequate. It is the challenge of the historian today to pursue the avenues opened by Dr. Brown.

The Letitia Woods Brown Estate

Tape Recordings

Each cassette is numbered on both sides to correspond to the descriptions below.

- ✓ 1. Part one of an interview with Mr. Thomas Wyatt Turner in Washington, D.C. Conducted by Dr. Brown on 2 April 1975. 31
2. Continuation of Thomas Wyatt Turner interview, as above. 32
3. Continuation of Thomas Wyatt Turner interview, as above. 23
4. BLANK
5. Unidentified female voice discussing the value of oral interviews for understanding other persons' world view
- × 6. Interview between two unidentified women. Tape is labeled "Annie McKay - Side 3 - (END)" but no other information is given.
8. ~~7.~~ ~~BLANK~~ *Sound begins later in tape.* 30
7. ~~8.~~ Very faint. May be an interview with and old black resident (female) of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. No other source of identification noted. *Tape is damaged. Sound does not carry throughout* 30
- ✓ 9. Part one of an interview with Evadne Clarke Woods at Tuskegee Institute, Ala. Conducted by Dr. Brown on 3 February 1970. 29
10. Continuation of Woods interview, as above. 30
11. Continuation of Woods interview, as above. 29
12. BLANK
13. Part one of an interview with Miss Beatrice Catlett in Washington, D.C. Conducted by Dr. Brown on 6 February 1974. 28
14. Continuation of Beatrice Catlett interview, as above. 28
15. Continuation of Beatrice Catlett interview, as above. 17
16. Continuation of Beatrice Catlett interview, as above. 19
17. Interview with Miss Beatrice Catlett and Miss Desiree (sp.?) Catlett in Washington, D.C. Conducted by Dr. Brown. Date is not stated. 62
18. Dr. Brown "interviewing" her grandson, Dwight Franklin. The voice of Lucy Brown Franklin can be heard in the background.
- ✓ 19. Interview with Mrs. Mabel M. Hall in Washington, D.C. Conducted by Dr. Brown on 19 June 1974. 27
20. Continuation of Mabel M. Hall interview, as above. 28

Page 2 - Tape Recordings in the Letitia Woods Brown Estate

of
minutes

21. Interview with Mr. Elmer Henderson, Staff Director, House Government Operations Committee. Ms. Nancy Griniece (sp.?) conducted the interview on 21 November 1973.
22. Continuation of Elmer Henderson interview, as above.
23. Part one of an interview with Mrs. Georgie Scheffie Johnson in Washington, D.C. Conducted by Dr. Brown and Mrs. Josie Johnson on 8 October 1973. 14
24. Continuation of Georgie Scheffie Johnson, interview, as above. 16
25. Continuation of Georgie Scheffie Johnson interview, as above. 30
26. Continuation of Georgie Scheffie Johnson interview, as above. 30
27. Continuation of Georgie Scheffie Johnson interview, as above. 35
28. BLANK
- 25.000- 29. Interview with Ms. Julia Brockman on 12 December 1973. Interviewer is unidentified but voice is female. More clues as to the identity of both parties may be found withing the body of the tape. 70
30. Blank after male voice "testing."
31. Speech. Tape label says "Rev. Brown, Blks. in Recon." Interrupted with radio or T.V. ads, then tape continues.
32. ~~Seems to be~~ Blank.
33. Interview with Ruth Farmer of the National Institute of Education. Conducted by Ted Brown, Jr.
34. BLANK
35. James Walker and Deborah Newman of the National Archives discussing various collections
36. Blank
37. Interview with Mrs. Mary Hundley. Conducted by Ms. Lori Seader³⁰ (?) (can't read label) on 29 March 1974 in Washington, D.C.
38. Continuation of Mrs. Mary Hundley interview as above. 30

Prepared by Mr. Greenlee

N.B. Eleven cassettes - Interview with Hayden Pair - November 1969. Male interviewer unidentified. These tapes were not assigned numbers by Mr. Greenlee, but were part of the group given to me by Dr. Gillette. & Ray

Taped Interviews Conducted by Mrs. Brown

M.Greenlee's
accession number

- 1-3 Thomas Wyatt Turner - 90 minutes - April 1975.
- 7-8 Miss Carroll (?) - 1 hour - no date.
- 9-11 Mrs. Evadne Clarke Woods - 90 minutes - 1970.
- 13-17 Miss Beatrice Catlett - 2 1/2 hours - February 1974.
- 19-20 Mrs. Mabel M. Hall - 1 hour - June 1974.
- 23-27 Mrs. Georgie Scheffie Johnson - 2 hours - October 1973.

Interviewee: Professor Thomas Wyatt Turner, retired (Prof. Botany, Howard U.)

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia W. Brown

Place: 1506 Lawrence St., Northeast, Washington, D.C.

Date: April 2, 1975.

Vol. I side 1 Personal
0-12 min.

Born in Southern Maryland, near the village of Hughesville. Son of Eli and Lennie Gross Turner. Born Charles County on March 16, 1877. Father died when Prof. Turner was still a boy. The eight sharecropper's children were scattered. Youngest sister went to D.C. (Fanny Rachel Broadus). Father not only was born in South America, but was first free family after the proclamation issued in 1865^[sic] to move to Charlotte Hall.

13-23 min. Schools

Attended school near Bryantown in the county of Charles. Teachers in that part of the county mostly white. Teacher was a Scot named Darg, a splendid man and teacher. Private school was opened for the colored people under auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Charlotte Hall Normal and Industrial School. In that high normal school, had two of the finest teachers: Mrs. Kayser (French) from New York Normal School (now Hunter College). Studied Latin and French. Also learned how to mend shoes from a man from Hampton Institute. Rev. Joseph Gordon Bryant was headmaster and found tuition for him. 100 students. Graduated. Directions to school: beyond Charlotte Hall turning left at New Market three quarters of a mile to the left as you go South (speaks of "down there" in St. Mary's County). Mentions Charlotte Hall Academy School for Boys (white). Asked where he went to college. His parents were just out of bondage. Mother and Father of different church denominations.

Different denominations lived on different sides of the road.

23-31 min. Churches

Since 1634 the Protestant Episcopal Church of England and the Catholics on the right were fighting over concubinage. "The one side most all the slaveholders were people, Catholic, Jesuit people, and others. On the left, nearly all of the people living, were of the Church of England. On the right side, there was very little concubinage among those Catholics. On the left, over toward the Patuxent River, the concubinage was very many, numerous. The masters are the people who did that. There wasn't so much of it, if you get what I mean, I'll be as plain as I can. When I was here at Washington, as head of the teacher's college, I tried to get Charlie Wesley to write that up. But I didn't get that done. You'd see in the black schools, mostly dark colored people and you'd see on the left, toward the Patuxent, many light colored people. Concubinage among the masters was very frequent, abundant, on the Church of England side of Route 5 (had to imagine Rte. 5, since there wasn't one then)". Formed an organization while at Howard Univ. to change these practices. Mrs. Brown asks about members of that Episcopal Church, "the large families." The Warrens(Henry); and the Warren girl became Roman Catholic. Mack boys. One became pastor of Baptists in Baltimore, strong friend. Quakers of Indiana, Ohio and parts of West Virginia in large numbers bought land. Took his wife to see these Quakers, too, his dear friends, white, and then apologized to his wife for their behavior. The father was Elisha Jones, mother Chloe. "I think I have a letter" from Chloe when he got the doctorate from Received a telegram from Booker T. Washington. His friend, Neville

Cornell University and the children, the boy who was his chum throughout. Quakers moved to Southern Maryland from Indiana because slavery was dying out. "Whites were too lazy to work tobacco," the land was lying fallow because the Negroes were leaving to go to Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Had many black friends. Turner's parents were not book-learned people.

Vol. I side 2 Personal

Douglass visited there. Went to the funeral of Frederick Douglass. Friend Golden Jones helped him whenever he had anything he wanted done in the county. Black friends included Willie Wade. Story about Mrs. Jones - a letter after PhD. (she always knew him as Tom Turner) - his full name was in the paper. Mrs. Brown asked where he got the name. Story about Louis Monroe, young orator. Browne lady, daughter of Bishop Browne, fine man, Mt. Vernon place. Train ran from Brandywine to Mechanicsville. Retired in 1945. Came to Washington by hitching a ride with a Negro man who came to the country to buy eggs from Good Hope Hill. Other market near the National Theatre. A teacher should know his subject, should be fully educated... I was Got his corner of the market at 7th and D Streets, NW to 10th. Market among the first faculty teaching in the black schools in Baltimore, teaching in the second year." Speaks of years in Tuskegee Institute. Moved market to about 5th and K streets. Talks of working at Howard University as a botanist, groundskeeper. Learned more in one year there than he did in four years at Howard. They put in courses which enabled him to get his doctorate degree. Graduate schools.

Speaks of Tulane University and a Mrs. Arnold at Notre Dame. "My First four year class in finishing Howard. The prep. Academy. piece is my eyes." Mrs. Arnold helped him "get straight" after his Entered second year. Stayed three years at the secondary school. late wife passed on. Education then was taking a new start as a subject. Dr. Cummings head. Entered Howard at 1898. Graduated 1901. President Asked about her family - Turner knew some of her relatives. Dr. Moore of class. Old building built from stones from reservoir at MacMillan place. in 1900, was only professor with an earned degree, doctorate. Asked L. D. Moore's views on teaching. In 1901 received a \$100 graduate teacher's scholarship to Catholic University of America because he didn't have enough money. Scholarship from St. Matthews at 10th and G. born into Roman Catholic Church. Interested in black Catholics. Received a telegram from Booker T. Washington. His friend, Neville

Thomas, a teacher, didn't like B. T. Washington.

Bethel

Talks about the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in the 1890's.

Sponsored the Bethel Literary Society. Meetings were generally good.

Leading pianist, Mrs. Pelham. Took up a collection. Louis Monroe,

Frederick Douglass visited there. Went to the funeral of Frederick

Douglass there.

Born in Georgetown - 1515 and 1517 26th Street; grandparents

Beth and Thomas Morgan, slaves from Fredericksburg; Grandfather

Story about Louis Monroe, young orator. Browne lady, daughter of

Bishop Browne, fine man, Mt. Vernon place.

Education

Talks of a teacher, Kelly Miller. "Not much of a teacher."

A teacher should know his subject, should be fully educated...I was

among the first faculty teaching in the black schools in Baltimore,

teaching in the second year." Speaks of years in Tuskegee Institute.

Learned more in one year there than he did in four years at Howard.

They put in courses which enabled him to get his doctorate degree.

Speaks of Tulane University and a Mrs. Arnold at Notre Dame. "My

niece is my eyes." Mrs. Arnold helped him "get straight" after his

late wife passed on. Education then was taking a new start as a subject.

Asked about her family - Turner knew some of her relatives. Dr. Moore,

in 1900, was only professor with an earned degree, doctorate. Asked

about his papers - getting help from his friends. Mrs. Thompson.

His niece. All his family pictures assembled by his sister. Was

born into Roman Catholic Church. Interested in black Catholics.

Johnsons, on I street, between 20th and 21st. Took vacations with the

Interviewee: Unidentified (Miss Carroll?) "everybody knew everybody else."

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown

Date of Interview: Unknown

Place of Interview: Unknown

Vol. I side 1
0-8 min.

First part of tape erased.

Family History

Born in Georgetown - 1515 and 1517 26th Street; grandparents

Vol. I side 2
0-15 min.

Elizabeth and Thomas Morgan, slaves from Fredericksburg; Grandfather

built the house, adding on as he had the money, hence the building was

unusual, had eleven rooms and stable, outside running water; three

sisters lived there with their children in their own part of the house.

Father worked as a waiter, mother as nurse and maid; money not plentiful,

but "always warmth at home."

Education

Graduated from old M Street High School and Minor Normal School;

while teaching, took her AB from Howard.

Career

Was demonstration teacher; principal of three schools, divisional director; in charge of administration of the DC elementary schools. Made first map of elementary school districts to comply with desegregation order; made maps until retirement in 1963.

Family

Both brothers went to Harvard, (Howard?) class of 1905; one died right before graduation; Romeo Carroll wrote a book. Parents: Alice and Dennis Carroll; as a child, family lived with a white family, the Johnsons, on I street, between 20th and 21st. Took vacations with the

Johnsons. "Life was very beautiful because everybody knew everybody else."

Georgetown Property Holders

Mentions black residents of Georgetown who owned their homes; racially integrated area.

Church

First Baptist Church and Mt. Zion - "main thing black people have) is the church and the home;" no crime; family rule.

16-24 min. After Remainder of the tape blank, presumably erased.

ol.I side 2
0-15 min. bought books for all of the schools. All of the light people went to white First part of the tape erased.

Alley Dwellings

Children of the alleys were not treated any differently (in the schools).

1914 Minor Normal School, had previously used top of Summer School. Leaders of the Black Community were Rev. Lee of Vermont Avenue Church, Lucy Moten taught that you were a lady and a teacher; had to wear both Rev. Brook of 19th Street Baptist, Mr. Montgomery, superintendent of the hat and gloves. She set tables up in the auditorium, taught teachers Eleventh Division schools.

how to stand up, sit down, which fork to use, etc. Taught that teachers Bethel Literary Society was very important. Meetings were well planned are examples for the children, teachers command respect. "Might not and attended, provided a wealth of information.

obey, but they do respect." Students couldn't get married. If they Churches and Skin Color

did, they had to leave school. One of the richest schools was Adams Morgan; sorry to see the way it is now. slaves, had fair skin. Attended church all day on Sunday, going to

several different churches. When she got married, said she would go to church no more. 19th Street congregation had fine jobs, many in

government service. Not as color conscious as job conscious.. By 1930 color wasn't anything. Polyanna club. She wasn't light, but didn't think it mattered. Being from a well-known family did make a difference.

Ministers and educators were community leaders. In recent years, doctors have also become leaders.

Berean Baptist Church had a lot of light skinned members. She was a member of Shiloh Baptist Church, active church - many programs for non-members and children, about 50% of members are middle class; members are teachers, government employees, work in beauty shops and gas stations.

1.I, side 1 Fanny Recommends Fanny Gould at 1626 S Street and Mary Buckner (a Catholic)
0-29 min.

as resource people. grandfather brought gifts to children, relatives

16-24 min. from After 1954 desegregation, was in charge of black and white schools, bought books for all of the schools. All of the light people went to white theaters. benefit for working at Tuskegee and helping with B.T.'s program.

Minor Normal School the right with it." Talks about series of letters in the 1914 Minor Normal School, had previously used top of Sumner School.

Lucy Moten taught that you were a lady and a teacher; had to wear both hat and gloves. She set tables up in the auditorium, taught teachers how to stand up, sit down, which fork to use, etc. Taught that teachers are examples for the children, teachers command respect. "Might not obey, but they do respect." Students couldn't get married. If they did, they had to leave school. One of the nicest schools was Adams Morgan; sorry to see the way it is now. (figure-lists a total of sixteen).

Public schools, teachers and administrators. Talks of people that married into the family. Crawfords, had Indian blood. Aunt Alice to Spellman School instead of Tuskegee, married Lovett. Mr. Charles P. Adams.

1.I, side 2 Lewis Adams
0-30 min.

Talks of Lewis Adams at Tuskegee. Opened a trade and business school. Shops on the square in the town of Tuskegee. It was a country community. Mr. Campbell helped start a school - politics. Appropriations from the State of Alabama. Family experiences. Wilson and Edwards. Talks of Snow Hill Institute and Tuskegee Institute. Her family, the Clarkes.

Interviewee: Mrs. Evadne Clarke Woods (Mother). Friedlander.

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown (Daughter). Speaks of

Date: February 3, 1970 and Industrial School. Lewis Adams' six

Place: Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama.

Vol. II, side 1

0-30 min. Local

Vol. I, side 1 Family

0-29 min.

Various local people around the town of Tuskegee. School. Mrs. Brown's Grandfather brought gifts to children, relatives Western University. Trades. Church School. Boarding school near from European trip to England, France and Germany. Booker T. Washington Kansas City, Kansas. Personal experiences and family recollections, sent Lewis Adams and J. H. Washington to Europe for three months as a

fringe benefit for working at Tuskegee and helping with B.T.'s program.

"They were both quite right with it." Talks about series of letters in the Lewis Adams estate. Mrs. Woods came to Washington in 1905. Lewis Adams died 1905. Lawyer, Powell, in Birmingham. Family was complaining about what Lloyd Jones was doing with the estate's property. Not settled for years. The Bond place. Oldest of Adams' sisters was Annie. Annie's children (lists ten children). Annie's sisters and brothers, half-brothers. - various aunts and uncles. Aunt Jenny, uncle Thomas, Fred, Charlie, Lily, Alice, Doris, Theresa, Ellie, Ida, Bessie, Nadora, Hattie (looking at a picture-lists a total of sixteen). Public schools, teachers and administrators. Talks of people that married into the family. Crawfords, had Indian blood. Aunt Alice to Spellman School instead of Tuskegee, married Lovett. Mr. Charles P. Adams.

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Mr. Clarke white, Mrs. Clarke Negro(father/mother). Friedlander.
Carter's newspaper (children:Jimmy, William, Margaret). Speaks of
Topeka (Kansas) Normal and Industrial School. Lewis Adams' six
children. 43 S Street

01.II,side 1

0-30 min. Local

01.I,side 1 Introduction

0-3 min.

Various local people around the town of Tuskegee. School.
Born September 1, 1882. Grandmother Adeline Griffin. Born on
Western University. Trades. Church School. Boarding school near
Orchard Street, Baltimore, Maryland.
Kansas City, Kansas. Personal experiences and family recollections.

3-12 min. Family

Family was partly from Baltimore, a small one. Lived at 1905
K Street. Moved to 1617 Corcoran Street, and stayed until finished
normal school and then to a house on P Street (Reverend's house at 1013).
Then moved to 935 T Street, then to a house on S Street. Father worked
at cleaning carpets, at hotels at parties. Also a waiter in the winter
time in private service. Father would not let mother work. She was a
seamstress. Sister Annie went to Howard, taught school in New York at
60th Street Junior High. Brother Sherwood had two drug stores in Montclair
and Orange, New Jersey. Went to war in 1914-15. Attended Howard pharmacy
school. Sister Desiree worked at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.
She took music from Harriet Gibbs Conservatory Music School at 9th and P
streets, southwest. Mother had no formal education and lived part of
her life in Baltimore, part in Washington. Her mother used ABC books to
teach her to read. Still has them.

12-17 min. Schools

Attended Magruder, Sumner, Minor Normal School (teacher's school).
Mentions Wornley and Phillips, in Georgetown; Cook School; Shaw Junior

Interviewee: Beatrice Catlett. Julia Davis school. Colored people

Vol. I, side 2 Interviewer: Letitia Woods Brown. Private Madeira School
0-17 min.

Date: February 6, 1974 corner of 17th Street. Adams school, where the

Place: 1943 S Street. Parents met at home of D.C. lawyer Wolfson.

Families: Burroughs girl married Roscoe Bruce (school superintendent).

Vol. I, side 1 Introduction vis: Burroughs lived around there. Some of the coloreds
0-3 min.

went Born September 1, 1882. Grandmother Adeline Griffin. Born on

Orchard Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Lived on Massachusetts between

3-12 min. Family 18th and especially on S Street. Elizabeth Keckley, seamstress

for Family was partly from Baltimore, a small one. Lived at 1905 of

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streets, southwest. Mother had no formal education and lived part of

her life in Baltimore, part in Washington. Her mother used ABC books to

teach her to read. Still has them. ing Feast.

12-17 min. Schools

Vol. II, side 1 Attended Magruder, Sumner, Minor Normal School (teacher's school).

0-28 min. Home Life

Mentions Wormley and Phillips, in Georgetown; Cook School; Shaw Junior

Sister had some music lessons. Bought a piano. Father didn't

High. Taught English and History. Julia Davis school. Colored people
01.I, side 2 lived in the area near Massachusetts Avenue. Private Madeira School
0-17 min. used to be on Southwest corner of 17th Street. Adams school, where the
Roosevelt children went. Parents met at home of D.C. lawyer Wolfson.
Families: Burroughs girl married Roscoe Bruce (school superintendent).
Matthews, Davis; Burroughs lived around there. Some of the coloreds
went to Sumner and Magruder. She was interested in Christian Science.
Blacks were not concentrated then. Lived on Massachusetts between
17th and 18th and especially on S Street. Elizabeth Keckley, seamstress
for Mrs. Abraham Lincoln lived near there. Beatrice didn't know of
her. Beatrice attended Bethel Literary Society. Mother took her,
father stayed home. Most of the outstanding Negroes brought there,
either to talk or perform. Went as a small child and part of her teens.
Heard Paul Laurence Dunbar, harpist. Booker T. Washington, and some
of the most famous Negroes.

Social Structure

Her perceptions of outstanding Negroes. Frederick Douglass came to
services at Metropolitan A.M.E. White hair. All the children knew him.
Ministers and men of the church ranked very high in status as outstanding
citizens. John W. Beckett was known for both his sermons and his singing.
Everyone looked up to Professor Layton. Metropolitan had outstanding
ministers. White people came to hear the choir. Concerts at Convention
Hall, rehearsals of Hiawatha's Wedding Feast.

Beatrice in high school. Brother James taught in the high school. Mary
Vol. II, side 2 lived in house with green shutters - she thinks she lived there quite a
0-23 min. while. Phil Williams. Lou Washington. Names her neighbors. Discusses

Home Life
Sister had some music lessons. Bought a piano. Father didn't
"red lining" and blacks moving into white neighborhood. Quite a few
schools' teachers lived on S street. Davis. Lucas. Cowan.

believe in buying on time. Saved up to pay for it. Learned how to play the piano. Was important to her group of people. Speaks about houses in her neighborhood, between 16th and 17th streets on Corcoran St. Lists some families. On the north side of the street were four brownstone homes belonging to Dr. Francis ("he built them"). 1617 Corcoran had a front yard - had planned for white people to live there. Most owned their homes - Mason family, Browns, McKinney, Butler, Rev. Penn. No tramps. All right living people. Negro Congressman from Mississippi lived there. Didn't look colored. The block was not paved. All colored people in the block. Socializing patterns: very busy, very friendly, but not too much visiting. Didn't allow kids to run in and out. Children had to come in house at noon. Got dressed and went out in the evening. Remembers teenage, third year high school. Dancehall at 12th and Vermont. New Year's party every year. Speaks again about residents and professions. Says white folks that moved in "didn't bother us". Asked about restrictive covenants. Story about white children vs. black children and Dad's peach tree, with white children forming a ring around her and her sister.

01.II, side 2 Date: February 6, 1974
0-23 min.

Schools

Discussing Mary Reese York. Played music to accompany Coleridge Taylor. Taught in the high school. M Street School. Ahead of Beatrice in high school. Brother James taught in the high school. Mary lived in house with green shutters - she thinks she lived there quite a while. Phil Williams. Lou Washington. Names her neighbors. Discusses "red lining" and blacks moving into white neighborhood. Quite a few schools' teachers lived on S street. Davis. Lucas. Cowan.

Churches

Rev. Bennett of the Episcopal Church - Calvary- didn't care for dark folks. Didn't know much about the congregation. Berean Baptist had lighter skinned people. 18th street between K and M streets.

School

Minor Normal School prejudice. The lighter skinned Negroes got better jobs. The lighter held the balance of power. Miss Lucy Moulton was principle of Minor. She was prejudiced according to Beatrice. Beatrice went to Baltimore and passed the exam. Appointed teachers based on their ranking in their class on graduation from Minor. Miss Shippen was pretty fair. Wormleys were powerful among the Negroes at the time. (see also a verbatim transcript of a 30 minute segment of the same tape discussing color stratification and society in Washington, D.C.)

He was a graduate of Harvard, but a political appointment. Seemed more interested in the social aspects than education as such. Speaks of Mr. Montgomery, a supervisor. Others in Mr. Bruce's circle of friends were anyone who wasn't too black. The Wormleys, Mrs. Enola Thomas Hightower (taught music) who lived at the corner of 9th and T streets. She could tell everything you wanted to know about the city of Washington, D.C., especially Southeast. Coral Burrell (an older sister and two brothers), mother-in-law of Mr. Bruce. Remembers those especially. Lived on Massachusetts between 17th and 18th streets. Julia Davis. The Matthews family. Their children went to Sumner and Magruder. Speaks of Dunbar High School, not the first. Had high school cadets, both black and white and a minor school at 17th and Chase streets, a white school.

Interviewee: Miss Beatrice Catlett and Miss Desiree Catlett

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown

Date: unknown

Place: unknown

(now a different name). Most of the coloreds lived between 14th and 16th

ol.I side 1 Music s. Edith Fleetwood. Mr. John Simms lived next door to the firehouse
0-62 min.

on New Concert at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Commencement concert. Metropolitan Church.

Desiree played piano and violin. From 1907 to 1910 she attended the Washington Conservatory, at 9th and T streets, was in a woman's home (Mrs. Gibbs Marshall). Talks a lot about music programs. Talks about schools and teachers' college requirements. Sorority, Beta Phi Beta. Baptist School. Problems in teachers union (colored), it wasn't very strong. Colored and whites were separated in schools then. Mr. Bruce, superintendent of schools. She thought he was not a good superintendent. He was a graduate of Harvard, but a political appointment. Seemed more interested in the social aspects than education as such. Speaks of Mr. Montgomery, a supervisor. Others in Mr. Bruce's circle of friends were anyone who wasn't too black. The Wormleys, Mrs. Enola Thomas Hightower (taught music) who lived at the corner of 9th and T streets. She could tell everything you wanted to know about the city of Washington, D.C., especially Southeast. Coral Burrell (an older sister and two brothers), mother-in-law of Mr. Bruce. Remembers those especially. Lived on Massachusetts between 17th and 18th streets. Julia Davis. The Matthews family. Their children went to Sumner and Magruder. Speaks of Dunbar High School, not the first. Had high school cadets, both black and white and a minor school at 17th and Chase streets, a white school.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MISS BEATRICE CATLETT, CONDUCTED BY
M Street school was the first high school, became Dunbar. Also Armstrong
and Normal in 1905. Blacks and whites didn't usually march together
except at inaugurations. Christian Fleetwood organized the colored
cadets. Fleetwoods lived on Pierce Place between S and T streets
(now a different name). Most of the coloreds lived between 14th and 16th
streets. Edith Fleetwood. Mr. John Simms lived next door to the firehouse
on New Hampshire avenue. Thought a great deal of him at Metropolitan Church.
Social clubs. Home for unwed mothers (for coloreds) similar to
Florence Whipple home for whites. Mrs. Marshall. Mrs. Hattie Gibbs'
father was a judge. Dr. Lela Whipple was in direct contact with the city's
medical people. She and Beatrice belonged to the same Lend a Hand Club,
which founded the home for unwed mothers. Negro woman physician lived
near Florida Avenue and T streets, just beyond 6th street. Brother
was on stage in the early 1940's. She gave some land (two pieces)
with two small houses to the group for the club out East Capital Street
(not next to the white club). Sold it to the white people for
\$52,000. Crittendon home, 5100 block. The real estate people tried
to take the land for a song. She retired, in 1951.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MISS BEATRICE CATLETT, CONDUCTED BY
DR. LETITIA WOODS BROWN ON FEBRUARY 6, 1974. THIRTY MINUTE SELECTION.

Mrs. Brown Letitia Woods Brown, Professor of American History and Civilization at The George Washington University, Washington, D C, interviews Miss Beatrice Catlett, a retired D C Public School teacher and life-long Washington resident.

Miss Catlett In this lively interview, Miss Catlett responds at length to Mrs. Brown's inquiries about her family history, affiliation with Metropolitan AME Church, and various aspects of life in Washington Negro society, of which she has been a part for more than ninety years.

B: The two and one-half hour taped interview was conducted at
C: Miss Catlett's home, 943 S Street, NW, on February 6, 1974. Miss Catlett
B: speaks in one unbroken sentence, linking her series of independent
C: clauses with a variety of conjunctions. The following transcription
B: is from a thirty minute continuous selection. Superfluous ands,
C: buts and a's are edited out. Diction, grammatical structure, and
hopefully, intent, are literally transcribed. were distinctly color
blind, you know, except when it came to men,

B: What about the men, were the men fair (skinned), too?

C: You know, they couldn't scrape up enough men (laughter).

B: This was a group of women?

C: Yes, they called themselves, it seems to me, the Blue Birds.

B: About how many of them would you say were there in the group?

C: I don't know. There were a lot of people who wanted to get into it.

Dr. Letitia Woods Brown on February 6, 1974. Thirty Minute Selection.

door. They were a very prominent one (family). Their name was Glenn*. Have you lived in Washington long?

Mrs. Brown (B): Most people who talk about Washington keep talking about color stratification and society. I'd like to hear what you think about social class in Washington as it has to do with color within the Negro community.

Miss Catlett(C): Well, at one time there were quite a few of them that tried to separate themselves, you know, along the color line. There was a group here named the those women, what did they call themselves?

B: Gay Northeasterners?

C: No.

B: That's not it, that was the late Forties.

C: Blue something.

B: Blue Veins?

C: No, Blue Birds, I think what was that called? Seems to me they called themselves the Blue Birds. They were distinctly color blind, you know, except when it came to men.

B: What about the men, were the men fair (skinned), too?

C: You know, they couldn't scrape up enough men (laughter).

B: This was a group of women?

C: Yes, they called themselves, it seems to me, the Blue Birds.

B: About how many of them would you say were there in the group?

C: I don't know. There were a lot of people who wanted to get into it.

* unable to verify spelling

- A family that moved in here, about the third family to move in next door. They were a very prominent one (family). Their name was the one Glenn*. Have you lived in Washington long? Walter Brooks of Nineteenth
- B: No, only about fifteen years. here at Metropolitan, a passing group -
- C: Oh, well, Mr. Glenn was a school teacher; his wife was one of the a Bruces. She was one of the leading members of that club. (positions),
- B: or About when was this? Is this in the twentieth century? Late Nineteenth? were not among that group. Now, I do remember Rev. Jenifer.
- C: He We moved here in 1912, and the Blue Birds were not new then. And then you know, Lillian Evans started that club called the ... what was that? Anyhow she started this club and invited only the fair folks to join. That man, Chase, who had the paper, laid her out so about it in his newspaper, the Bee. He laid her out so about it that they invited this brown/skinned girl to join. The Kingdoms, that is what it was called. I'm pretty sure. She invited this brown skinned girl to join. Well, this particular girl was known for her desire to associate with them and she went in with them. I saved that piece on the tirade that Chase put in his Bee, but it got lost. They finally
- B: died out, this particular club, but he stayed on. that a social gathering
- B: Would you want to say any of the people who were in it that you remember? I don't want to push you. I'd really like to know. Some
- C: people maintain that the leadership group were all fair skinned; I happen to know that they weren't. As you mentioned, the men. Would you think that the color, it was important for this one little social group, but when you looked at the ministers, the doctors, and all,

* unable to verify spelling. They didn't speak to you because they were

would you say that they are all fair skinned, or no?

C: Oh, no! No, they weren't all fair skinned, you can start with one of the outstanding ministers here, that was Walter Brooks of Nineteenth Street, and of course we have there at Metropolitan, a passing group - the ministers didn't stay over. At least they had, I think they had a time of three years and then they probably obtained (other positions), or something like that and I know some of the outstanding ministers at Metropolitan were not among that group. Now, I do remember Rev. Jenifer. He was very fair. He was there about the time when I was around about the seventh grade because his daughter was in my seventh grade class. And there were a few others, but the outstanding ones: he'd take the Rev. G. W. Beckett*, and I think, one of the most outstanding ones

B: they had was the Reverend, I forgot his initials but, ... other Johnson*, he was from Canada and a wonderful speaker and a well educated

C: man. He was more, he was very dark, but he had beautiful skin and beautiful hair and looked like he might have been of Indian extraction, but he was from Canada and he was not only a, well, a good minister, but he was a well educated man all around. they didn't mean all of

B: the Would you say that socially pretty generally that a social gathering would have people of all coloring in it? Except for this little group that you mentioned? 't hesitate to call their names, too!

C: Well, they were several groups, you know, like that. They tried to, and there was a bunch of 'em once here a little they wouldn't speak to you downtown and all that sort of thing. member of the fairer

B: sk Would you think that they were trying to pass for white people

C: when you saw them downtown? They didn't speak to you because they were

passing for whites? Oh out in Northeast? Rev Doug Bennett* didn't

C: Yes, yes! That was it! They'd speak to you uptown if you'd speak

B: to them. Of course, I didn't speak to them. If they didn't, couldn't

C: speak to me one place, I didn't speak to them no where. If I saw

B: them coming, those that I knew and thought that they were going to

B: speak, I wouldn't unless I knew that they were friendly people, see.

C: If ever you didn't speak to me downtown, you never spoke to me anymore!

B: If you did, I didn't speak to you. And then there were a lot of us

C: like that. I was talking to a lady the other night and we were

B: laughing about it, about how I was just as black uptown, just as

B: black downtown as I was down in white town, down as I was uptown.

B: (She mixed her expressions here; not sure of her meaning). the lighter

B: sk Do you think these people went into places downtown where other Street?

C: more darker hue'd people couldn't go? That's what they were doing, huh?

C: Yes! You let these bus boys of that time tell the story about

B: them coming downtown to the restaurants and all that sort at night, actly

B: some of them. Now of course, that didn't mean all of them, and they

B: weren't all ugly and prejudiced, you know; they didn't mean all of

B: them, but there were those that, and plenty of 'em, the bus boys didn't

B: would tell you about coming downtown with veils on and all like that

B: at night. They didn't hesitate to call their names, too!

B: But the rest of the Negroes would really talk about them when they

B: found out that they were going down there passing? Were there

C: any particular churches where you had a higher number of the fairer

B: skinned ones than others? member any other.

C: Yes, because Reverend what's that man's name? In

B: this Episcopal church out in Northeast? Rev Doug Bennett* didn't care about a black congregation, everybody knew that.

B: That was an Episcopal church?

C: Yeah, Rev Bennett: he used to be out in Northeast. You ask

C: somebody else that knows better even than I. . . . it was a

B: preYou don't remember the name of the church? the Washington Normal

C: Sch Yes, Calvary Episcopal Church.

B: And they didn't care much about the dark folks there?

C: He didn't. I don't know much about the others, and then I, it was said that, my mother said that the Berea Church broke off from

B: Nineteenth Street. ut and got a job!

B: Wait a minute, now, what were the Bereans? Were those the lighter skinned ones? And they left the darker skinned ones at Nineteenth Street?

C: preYes, Berean Baptist Church. Their first church, they had a church when I was a child, on eighteenth street between, I'll say, K and M streets. on I remember how the church looks, but I don't remember exactly where it was. They were jumping on some Congressman, I remember, as I was growing up, something about color. I don't remember just what

B: it was. But I remember that he brought it out that the niggers didn't

C: want themselves, wanted to be separated themselves, and he mentioned this Berean Baptist. was just a generally known thing around town that

B: the Were there any of the others (churches) around town that you think may have been color conscious? me, two other teachers came there that

C: wor I don't remember any other churches right now that were labeled as such. No, I don't remember any other. se, Miss Shipper . Of course,

Miss Dickerson and Miss Wormley were just as fair as Miss Moore

- B: I Can you think of any other things of Washington life where the question was raised that only light skinned can go in? I didn't ever
- C: You mean by the Negroes themselves? 'cause I came out three and
- B: That's right, I'm talking about inside the Negro group. just
- C: I, let me see now, the churches, of course it was a
- B: pretty well, fairly well established fact that the Washington Normal School was. nobody really thought about it and the degree of it. What
- B: The Washington Normal School? link that Miss Lucy Moten was
- C: I meant to say Minor; there was a prejudice there that assured
- C: that the lighter girls would get the jobs. had the Normal School because
- B: Well, you got out and got a job! other, because I never had bothered
- C: You know how I got my job?! First of all when I went there I said to my mother "I want to come out in the first five. Now, you do the praying and I'll do the studying." Now, she would tell you that! her,
- And then the second year, that was my graduating year, in October of that second year before I graduated, I went to Baltimore, took the
- B: examinations and passed. So, then Lucy Moten could not, did not
- C: have a string to hold me back on. appointed, you had to be appointed
- B: What was this Lucy Moten doing there? Normal School, that's what
- C: She was the principal of Minor, and she was the one that was so
- B: prejudiced. No, it was just a generally known thing around town that the light girls had the balance of power in a way. But another
- thing, too, just about that time, two other teachers came there that were very fair, one of them was Miss Jessie Wormley and another one
- C: was Miss Elizabeth Dickerson* and of course, Miss Shipper*. Of course, Miss Dickerson and Miss Wormley were just as fair as Miss Moten.

I mean, so far as color was concerned; and so far as being impartial, they were. As I said, I had to fight for me, because I didn't ever believe that I'd come out where I did, 'cause I came out three and
 B: I don't believe; our class, I think we had about thirty, I just know . . . that I forgot you had that thing going

B: You're doing fine, that's all right, because I really wanted to get what somebody really thought about it and the degree of it. What you're suggesting is that you think that Miss Lucy Moten was about prejudiced. I've heard that before. year. She was a lovely teacher.

C: /en You know I had heard that before I reached the Normal School because

B: I never would have said it to my mother, because I never had bothered her with my lessons and things, but I just knew what had happened

C: over the years and I knew what they said had happened; that's what it, I said, and I wanted a job, I wanted to go to work. So I said to her, "you do the praying and I'll do the work." Because I wanted to come out in the first five. little bit more than twenty since my mother's

B: bee And you didn't have trouble getting appointed? here to live. She

C: was Oh, no! Because when you were appointed, you had to be appointed according to the way you came out of Minor Normal School, that's what I'm telling you about! time in such a short time; that was just my!

B: not I see, they appointed you on your ranking in the class out of

B: Minor? Uh, huh. So, that you think while Miss Moten was probably

C: giving, had some, wasn't really quite straight on this, that some of the other people who taught at Minor were?

C: I know that they were! I know that they were! I think everybody even (knew) because when things go wrong, you know, they would be

- C: just as tough on one as they were on the other. When I got to
- B: Normal School there had been a lot of changes made. Did I mention Miss Shippen before?
- B: You mentioned her but you didn't say much about her. You thought that she was pretty impartial, too?
- C: Yes, and nobody thought, you see, the Wormleys were very powerful, you know, I mean among Negroes around here at the time, and they didn't give Miss Wormley much, you know, they didn't talk about Wormley; came there during my first year. She was a lovely teacher.
- /end of tape/
- B: You said that your mother insisted that you learn to read even before you went to school?
- C: She didn't insist, she just taught me. I've often thought about it, my mother was born teacher but she just didn't have the education to put it into practice. But I remember about, oh, it's been twenty years ago now, maybe a little bit more than twenty since my mother's been dead more than twenty, we took a little girl here to live. She was seven years old and my mother was shocked because she didn't know how to tell time. She was here last summer and was laughing because she learned how to tell time in such a short time; that was just my mother's way of doing things.
- B: Where did you get the little girl?
- C: Oh, she was a little girl that was related to my sister's husband.
- B: And you just took her, and she lived with you?

C: in She came here and went to school for a while. on Massachusetts

B: Ave So, you'd say that one of the biggest influences was your people
mother? that 1700 block. No. . . .

C: My mother and father, because, next to church, school was their

B: religion. You had to learn, you weren't anybody unless you were

C: learning. Well, of course I was born seventeen years after the

Civil War and the people with whom my father worked; my father met

B: my mother at this place; these people whose name was Wilson lived down

C: on Farragut Square. The head of that house was a lawyer here in

Washington, as I said, my father met my mother there. These people

had a horde of children, they had seven children. They all went to

school, so after I came along, after they were married, there wasn't

anything else for me to do but I was to go to school. Those people

took quite an interest in us. When Christmas time came, why we had

books and things like their children did. So, as I said, then, too

after we were any size when we were living there on Corcoran Street

all of the rest of the children were going to school. Of course specially

it was up; we had to go; it was fun to go to school, we didn't

B: have any trouble keeping up. I don't think either my mother or any

father, either one, ever had to go to school to see about one of

C: us staying away from school, because we wanted to go. I along there,

B: and Most of the children in your neighborhood also wanted to go to

school? Girls married Roscoe Bruce who was one time the Superintendent

C: of Well, whether they wanted to or not, they had to go! There were . .

a lot of colored children who lived, you see, we weren't concentrated

in as much as we are now. For instance up there on Massachusetts Avenue between seventeenth and eighteenth, there were colored people all along that 1700 block. No. . . . who lived along there but

C: Have you been in Washington very long? on to you went to Sumner and

B: About fifteen years. I happen to remember them.

C: Did you know Miss Julia Davis? That lived right up here on

C: Vermont Avenue?

B: No, I don't. woman who was the seamstress for Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.

C: I was about to say that she was ahead of me in school, but her

B: family lived on Massachusetts Avenue between seventeenth and eighteenth. There were a number of colored people that owned houses

along there. I had an aunt, she didn't own her house; there was a

C: private school, Madeira School, that used to be on the south west

B: corner of Massachusetts and seventeenth streets. Then, the Adams

C: School, that's where the Roosevelt children used to go; I think it, we

was Adams up there on Massachusetts Avenue between seventeenth and

eighteenth. And the colored people who lived all along there, especially

B: along that south side of the street. Literary Society meetings?

B: Who were some of the families, can you remember the names of any

of them? part of my teens, because my mother was always very

C: Well, yes, there was a family of Matthews* who lived along there,

and this Davis that you hear me speak of, and the Burroughs*; one of

those girls married Roscoe Bruce who was one time the Superintendent

of Schools here. Let me see, girl. . . . for a while my aunt lived

there were two frame houses with porches down on that side of

Massachusetts Avenue and there was a store on the corner and a white man named Galvin* came and he lived right next door to that store. There were other colored people who lived along there but the children of these houses that I mention to you went to Sumner and Magruder and that's how I happen to remember them.

B: Did you ever know anything about Elizabeth Keckley*?

C: No, I didn't.

B: She was the woman who was the seamstress for Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.

C: No!

B: And she lived in Washington for a short time late in her life, in addition to in the 1860's. I wondered if you ever heard of her at all.

C: No, I didn't.

B: What churches did you go to in this particular area?

C: Well, 'till I grew up, I went to Metropolitan A M E. Since then, we

have been interested in Christian Science and we haven't attended any one regularly.

B: Did you ever go to the Bethel Literary Society meetings?

C: Oh, my goodness, yes. When I was little, as a small child, even after in part of my teens, because my mother was always very interested and took me. But my father didn't go much. He stayed

home, but my mother always took me for company. It was there that

I first heard Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Madame Selek*. And I

remember there was a colored girl, a harpist, I can't ever

remember her name, whom I heard there. Booker T. Washington; most

the most, of course the ministers ranked and then there were a few

of the outstanding Negroes were brought there to the Bethel Literary to either talk or perform. That was where I heard a lot of them.

B: Let me ask you a couple of questions about the social structure during this period. And I really just want you to tell me what you think about it. When you were young, who would you say were the outstanding Negroes in the District? What you would call the four or upper class? The middle class? Your own perceptions about that?

C: Of course, Frederick Douglass was the outstanding one. Beckett was

B: You would call him the first citizen?

C: Yes, I would because I had a chance as you may say to rub shoulders (with him) because he went to Metropolitan church and everybody knew him with his white hair, you know, and the children all knew him and he was the outstanding Negro.

B: Did he come to church services at Metropolitan Church very much or did he come just for the meetings and so on?

C: No, I can remember seeing him, he came for all the services because I can remember seeing his white hair going up the aisle and as I was talking to Mrs. Johnson, she recalled the fact, I think it

B: was just yesterday, I don't know how it came up, she used to sit there, the girls that she sat with used to sit up there near where

C: Frederick Douglass sat. They didn't go to the real concert, but they rehearsed

B: So you would say that he was sort of the first citizen. Who else would you call the most respected Negroes?

C: I don't know because as I think of it now, there were

C: The people that you saw the most, I suppose you thought about them the most, of course the ministers ranked and then there were a few:

B: you looked up to the men, the first men of the church, as the most outstanding people. Metropolitan Church did have outstanding ministers; they do stand out, some of them. Oh, by the way, I have a picture that I found the other day, of Reverend William Beckett's^{*} wife; it was his second wife. I put it aside wondering if it could be of any service to you. When he came to our church, he had four or five children and at least he had, yes, because they had one child born here, shortly after marriage. The Reverend John W. Beckett was outstanding in the city both for his sermons and for his voice. The people from the, I remember how often, you know, our churches used to stay in for quite a long while, at least it used to seem that way to me. The people from those white churches in the neighborhood used to come in before we were out to hear him sing. Professor Layton was one of the people that everybody looked up to. His choir at Metropolitan was an outstanding one, and as I said, the people used to come. When I say people, I mean white people especially would come from their churches to hear him sing at the end of the services sometime, specially to hear Rev J. W. Beckett.

B: By any chance did you go to the Metropolitan concert when they did Hiawatha's wedding feast?

C: Yes, indeed! I didn't go to the real concert, but they rehearsed in our church, and I went every day to rehearsal. I think they had that concert down at, oh down at Do you remember the place?

B: Old Virginia Home?

C: Down at a big hall. I went to the rehearsal at the church and down at the convention hall.

Interviewer: Mrs. Mabel M. Hall
 B: Did many other people go to the rehearsals? Were there many

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown
 other people listening for the rehearsals?

Date: June 19, 1974
 C: No, not too many people, they were held at an awkward part of the

Place: 5309 Colorado Avenue, Washington, D.C.
 day, you know, when most people were at work. I would somehow or other
 get away and get down there. /end of tape/

1.1 side 1 Family History
 0-29 min.

Lived in Arlington with grandparents, then Washington, D.C.
 Grandfather's father was the master, black/white blood. Were going
 to sell Grandmother. Grandparents: Eliza and Spencer Coleman, bought
 2100 Twenty-first street, high on a hill. Occupied two units, rented
 the two rear apartments. Became a bondsman until one ran away. Partitioned
 by Lincoln. Made shoes; five-room house. She was a mid-wife.

Mabel an only child. Her mother would take in any children who
 needed; mother remarried. Mother worked in the Bureau of Engraving and
 Printing. They bought property from her grandfather between N and O for
 the Newport Place. Used money to buy property in Arlington. Lived in
 LeDroit Park (U street, formerly Spruce Street, between 4th and 5th).
 She was 16 then. Not too many colored people then. Kept house in
 Arlington, Virginia; also apartment. Moved to 2010 Thirteenth Street
 when she was married. Mother, Mary Overton Spriggs (died in 1941).
 Had three husbands. Mr. Spriggs worked at the Bureau, also. She worked
 there until she retired. At that time, lived at 1619 D Street. She
 bought that; at least her husband left her that.

Education

She attended Stevens school. Wornaley, in Georgetown. M Street
 High School. "Didn't graduate for nobody, nowhere;" was a homemaker;

Interviewee: Mrs. Mabel M. Hall

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown

Date: June 19, 1974

Place: 5309 Colorado Avenue, Washington, D.C.

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Mabel an only child. Her mother would take in any children who needed; mother remarried. Mother worked in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. They bought property from her grandfather between N and O for the Newport Place. Used money to buy property in Arlington. Lived in LeDroit Park (U street, formerly Spruce Street, between 4th and 5th). She was 16 then. Not too many colored people then. Kept house in Arlington, Virginia; also apartment. Moved to 2010 Thirteenth Street when she was married. Mother, Mary Overton Spriggs (died in 1941). Had three husbands. Mr. Spriggs worked at the Bureau, also. She worked there until she retired. At that time, lived at 1619 D Street. She bought that; at least her husband left her that.

Social worker 32 years. Family did a lot of social service in the Education

church; paid people's rent, helped with medical bills, buy kid's shoes.

She attended Stevens school. Wormley, in Georgetown. M Street Family church. First Baptist Church, Vermont Avenue. 110 years High School. "Didn't graduate for nobody, nowhere;" was a homemaker; old. 300 active members. Part of National Baptist Church. Very few members lived in Georgetown. All black ministers. No white members;

some whites attended services. Bethel Literary Society at Metropolitan

took care of old folks. didn't go often. All socialize with members of the

Home Life M Street School epistates. didn't finish school. Talks of family

14-28 min. She never worked outside the home. Married Forrest Carroll, first husband. First daughter, Mrs. Cash (Dorothy Carroll Cash); her aunt Josephine Carroll Smith, younger than Forrest. Second husband, James Hall. First husband lived at Chesterbrook, born in Washington. Second husband Washington-born also. She attended First Baptist Church. Lived at 26th and P streets. Met at church things. Married when 18. His family went to Shiloh Baptist; he was 18. Child born. Four generations of girls. Her daughter (married in April 1974) had a daughter. Daughter worked 28 years at Woodward & Lothrop. Her daughter, Gloria Jones, principal at Garrison Elementary School. Reared many children; took in everybody's children. Had as many as four in her home at one time. Mrs. Hall taught Sunday School for 17 years. Played bridge, danced and worked in her church. When sold D street home, bought 5309 Colorado Avenue. Her grandfather lived more than 100 years. Reporter for The Star came on 100th birthday and wrote an article. Belonged to clubs-Lyres, played cards; pleasure clubs, couples; Chandeliers. Dances at Oddfellows Hall (17th and M streets) and in the afternoon at 12th and U streets. Music - Thomas Brothers, men played. Owned house at T street.

Vol.I, side 2

0-13 min. Church

Social worker 32 years. Family did a lot of social service in the church; paid people's rent, helped with medical bills, buy kid's shoes. Family church. First Baptist Church, Vermont Avenue. 110 years old. 300 active members. Part of National Baptist Church. Very few members lived in Georgetown. All black ministers. No white members; some whites attended services. Bethel Literary Society at Metropolitan

A.M.E. Church. Mabel didn't go often. All socialize with members of the church. M Street School episodes. Didn't finish school. Talks of family attitudes toward young and old. Taking care of each other. Strong

14-28 min. family ties; stayed home to care for grandmother. Stayed because

she wanted to. First husband a barber. Second husband worked for

the government. Moved to the District from Wytheville, Virginia in May 1892.

In Wytheville, wealthy English farmer wanted the right people to live on

the corner of his property. He invited mother and grandfather to buy

the corner. They built their home in an area where there were no

colored people. Grandfather highly respected. Mother was a school

teacher, had been taught by John W. Crowwell. Grandfather, Frederick

Woodson, had brought Crowwell to Wytheville to teach in the one room

schoolhouse he had founded. Mother wanted her children to be educated

at a better school. Grandfather was a slave overseer; he bought

and sold slaves for his master, Sawyer. learned to read and write

from the Yankees. General Thomas raided Wytheville. Grandfather hid

his master. Union soldiers paid grandfather in gold for food and washing

clothes. Grandfather introduced crude irrigation. The Sawyers made

slaves go to church and marry. Proud to be descended from a legal

marriage. Lincoln's proclamation kept from the slaves.

Vol. I side 2 October 8, 1973

0-14 min. Amateur singing career

Sang in various churches and schools with her sister. Churches

"made money off of us and didn't even give us car fare-they exploited

us".

(Looking at photo's with Mr. George Walton present) Mrs. Johnson loved

Interviewee: Mrs. Georgie Scheffie Johnson

Interviewer: Dr. Letitia Woods Brown

Date: October 2, 1973 and October 8, 1973

Place of Interview: 1918 17th Street, Northwest

Vol. I side 1 Family history

0-14 min.

13-22 min.

Family moved to the District from Wytheville, Virginia in May 1892.

In Wytheville, wealthy English farmer wanted the right people to live on the corner of his property. He invited mother and grandfather to buy the corner. They built their home in an area where there were no colored people. Grandfather highly respected. Mother was a school

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us". partial because they were low class." SW had immoral section.

(Looking at photos with Mr. George Walton present) Mrs. Johnson loved

singing at night, twice a week.

18-23 min. to walk and play tennis. Didn't like housework, didn't want to learn to cook, wanted single, free life. Met her husband when he entered Howard Medical School. He taught her how to cook, made her skin three wild rabbits.

Folk singers it's alley dwellings were called courts. Other children

13-22 min. William Cook (?) genuine Negro talent, about thirty folk singers, not spirituals. About 1915, Nathan Dent (?) took over folk singers group, practiced at Mrs. Marshall's conservatory. Travelled to Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. Went on private train. Marian Anderson was the soloist.

22-27 min. Math teacher: Garrison, Military Road, Sumner Schools. "Hate

Vol. II side 2 Howard University the Negro." Mrs. Johnson suffered because she was

0-6 min. Mr. George Walton's brother had come to Washington in 1910, sent for George in 1916, tells story of first encounter with George Cook, head of commercial department at Howard. Cook "smoothed off the rough edges of these rural students," taught typing, other subjects lacking from rural education. Walton did not graduate. His brother became D.D.S. Walton spent forty years working for the railroad, belonged to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Drafted forty-five days before armistice in 1918.

7-15 min. Randall Junior High in the nation.

7-18 min. Mrs. Johnson taught at Randall Jr. High in Southwest, left in 1928. Zion Baptist instrumental in establishing the school. Considered a slum. Children had no sophistication, very different from NW children. "I was never partial because they were low class." SW had immoral section. Over a thousand students held three day banquet to honour old teachers. Practiced singing at night, twice a week.

Mrs. Johnson didn't want any boys who could not play tennis and

18-23 min. Le Droit Park Mrs. Johnson's wife instrumental in

19-20 min. building Mrs. Johnson didn't want any beau who could not play tennis and

20-35 min. could not walk. Lived in Le Droit Park on Oak Street. Around 1901, the street was renamed Oak Court because it was a dead end. Residents upset because it's alley dwellings were called courts. Other children teased the residents, calling them "alley coons." Mrs. Johnson wrote to the commissioners telling them what court meant. She recommended Oakdale Place, as it is now. residents included Dr. DeLaney, Willie

24-34 min. Mrs. Ellen Wilson Mrs. Johnson believed the first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson ("a Georgia

cracker") brought on segregation worse than slavery times. "Hate campaign against the Negro." Mrs. Johnson suffered because she was prevented from attending "high class plays" as she used to. who

Vol. III Negro student boarder depressed. Ladies pulled him away, "you side 1

1-6 min. Story of a Negro student living with the Johnsons while attending Armstrong High School. He was a country boy, others made fun of him. Made poor grades. Mrs. Johnson entered him in nationwide competition on the Constitution. Trained him on correct pronunciation and delivery. Made him memorize the speech. Racketeers were sending out written speeches to sell to the children. Made him tear it up. Won the D.C. contest, came in third in the nation.

7-18 min. Travellers' Aid

During World War I, helped in organizing Travellers' Aid. Arranged for volunteers to cover every hour at Union Station, to assist new arrivals to the city. Tells several stories. Travellers' Aid was segregated. Her group was temporary. Colored never brought into

regular Travellers' Aid. Bishop Brooks' wife instrumental in
 19-20 min. building a new Y at Rhode Island Avenue. as well as important material
 20-35 min. LeDroit Park of Mrs. Brown's prominence as a Washington historian.

Mrs. Johnson's mother, Laura Ann Woodson, worked at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Had to get recommendation to move to LeDroit Park. Had a brick walk-up flat at 321½ Oakdale Place on the north side of the street, built by a philanthropist for decent, but poor, colored people. Other residents included Dr. DeLaney, Millie Dillworth Bell, Stella Thomas, Gladys Brooks, Mary Price Shorter family. Johnson's only family that belonged to Metropolitan Church, others went to Berean, Walker (13th Street), St. Mary's and St. Luke's Episcopal. Most residents worked for government, some were porters. Father did not live with them in LeDroit Park. He was a tradesman, who liked the ladies, became depressed. Ladies pulled him away, "you know how they do in Washington . . . A man can't take disappointment like a woman can."

and history collection, and has in place to initiate a tape library.

3) The George Washington University Library under the direction of Mary Jo Beering began an active oral history collection, which included a black history section. Since her departure, most of the oral history collecting has been carried on by the American Civilization Department, of which Mrs. Brown was a member. Presumably the interviews conducted by Mrs. Brown were made by GW students. The University Library could provide excellent storage and listening facilities; however, there is no staff currently available to transcribe the tapes.

The interviews conducted by Mrs. Brown are clearly valuable resources for the study of Washington, as well as important material by virtue of Mrs. Brown's prominence as a Washington historian.

Like GW, It is recommended that the tapes be deposited at a research center and made available to scholars. Five institutions in the metropolitan area are known for their collections of Washingtoniana: The Library of Congress; The D.C. Public Library, Washingtoniana Division; The George Washington University Library; Columbia Historical Society Library; and the Howard University Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

1) Library of Congress: oral history holdings include microfilm copies of the Columbia University Oral History Program, and recordings in the American Folklife Center. Since these collections are not within the scope of Mrs. Brown's tapes, LC would probably be an inappropriate repository for the collection.

2) D.C. Public Library, Washingtoniana Division has no oral history collection, and has no plans to initiate a tape library.

3) The George Washington University Library under the direction of Mary Jo Deering began an active oral history collection, which included a local history section. Since her departure, most of the oral history collecting has been carried on by the American Civilization Department, of which Mrs. Brown was a member. Presumably the interviews^{not} conducted by Mrs. Brown were made by GW students. The University Library could provide excellent storage and listening facilities; however, there is no staff currently available to transcribe the tapes.

4) Columbia Historical Society maintains a small oral history collection which includes both interviews and lectures. Perry Fisher, the librarian at the CHS indicated that he hoped to expand the collection. Like GW, however, there is no staff available for transcription.

5) The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center is actively expanding its oral history collections, especially in the area of black Washington studies. Transcription of tapes is an on-going process at MSRC.

The tapes are of uneven technical quality, and are in varying states of disrepair. They should be transferred to archival quality tape before they are transcribed.

Apparently there are no signed releases for any of the interviews. As a matter of courtesy, perhaps legality, some attempt should be made to contact the interviewees, or in the case of the students, the interviewers, and obtain necessary permission before the tapes are made public.